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The Puritans' Farewell to England

Massachusetts
Being

The Humble Request

of the Governor and Company of
the *Massachusetts-Bay* in *New*
England about to depart upon

THE GREAT EMIGRATION

April 7, 1630

Reprinted in facsimile for the *Members and Friends* of
the NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY in the CITY OF NEW
YORK in honour of the two hundred and ninety-
second anniversary of *Forefathers Day*



New-York: Printed for THE SOCIETY, MDCCCCXII

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NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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THE successful planting of New England was assured by The Great Emigration of 1630. For a hundred years, English farmers and country landholders had been watching with keenest interest a bitter struggle between some of their neighbours who would not go to the parish church and others in places of official power who believed just as conscientiously that those who did not go to church could not be law-abiding citizens. It was a difference of opinion for the sake of which several men gladly rode to the scaffold, while others, both men and women, died in the filthy English jails. Scores who were put in prison, because they would not do things which they thought were contrary to the Word of God, suffered grievously in physical health, but they developed a sort of moral character which has had a far-reaching influence wherever English folk have lived.

The number of those who participated in this struggle was not large, compared with those who went about their daily affairs, wondering what might be the meaning of all the turmoil over matters of religious practice. In time, one thing came to be

plain to a large body of Englishmen ; that the conditions of life about them were not good for people who desired to bring up their families to fear God and obey the Law. It was a very momentous decision to which this belief led, when more than a thousand of these home-loving English men and women went on board the vessels of the Massachusetts-Bay Company bound for America.

There were many Trading Companies organized in London during the early years of the Seventeenth Century, for ventures over-seas in the Levant, or to Muscovy, Africa, the Indies, or America. Some of them made money for the adventurers, and more of them—as in earlier and later days—collected goodly sums for the initial expenses from those who hoped to make their fortunes. Most of the Companies were organized by small groups closely allied by business or social interests. One of these was “The Governor and Company of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England,” which secured a grant of land and a charter from King Charles the First on March 4, 1629. A hundred men were soon on their way to erect the beginnings of a colony where

fishermen could traffic and the natives barter for furs. A year later, these men had done nothing of any value toward providing for their own maintenance, while the accounts of the Company in London were in such a state that the share holders were forced to agree to a reorganization whereby they surrendered two-thirds of the amount they had paid, and put what was left into the control of a special committee, which agreed to administer the joint account and make a settlement at the end of seven years.

The men who organized this Company and carried on its business doubtless hoped that it might be a profitable commercial venture. It is equally probable that some of them had in mind from the beginning of the enterprise the possibility of establishing a convenient refuge to which they could retire without sacrifice of their English birthright, in the event of a fresh outbreak of religious persecution in Great Britain. The subscribers unquestionably expected a return from their investment, but it is more than likely that most of them regretted their losses less when they realized that they had helped to prepare the way for The Great Emigration.

The Governor of the Massachusetts-Bay Company, the prosperous London merchant and ship-owner, Matthew Cradock, proposed in July, 1629, that the Company choose a new list of officers, of men who were going to reside in the colony. A reason for his suggestion became apparent a month later, when twelve gentlemen met at Cambridge, and after careful discourse signed a paper pledging each to transport himself to the New England settlement, on certain conditions, of which the most important was that they were to take with them the actual government of the colony.

These twelve were all men of property and of wide acquaintance. Two, John Humphrey and Isaac Johnson, were sons-in-law of the Earl of Lincoln, who was indebted to a third, his steward, Thomas Dudley, for the management which yielded an adequate income from estates that had previously been heavily encumbered. Sir Richard Saltonstall owned land in the West Riding, and had been a large subscriber to the Company's operations. William Vassall was a London merchant who was just beginning to add to his wealth by his American investments. William Colburn, Increase

Nowell and William Pynchon are better known for the parts they played in New England affairs. John Winthrop, the owner of an estate at Groton in Suffolk, had had a law office in London, and was the man to whom the others seem to have turned for the final decision whether they should go or stay to await the development of events in England. When, a few weeks later, the legal formalities had been completed and the new officers were elected, Winthrop became the first Governor of the Massachusetts-Bay Company resident in New England.

Winthrop and his assistants in the management of what has come to be known as "The Great Emigration" were men who had much at stake, and they went earnestly about the task of assuring a prosperous future for themselves and for the thousand who accepted their leadership. There were many things to be looked after, but none more important than the maintenance of their good repute as men of sound judgment and wise counsel. There was every reason why they should be careful that this expedition should not be confounded with others that had left England for reasons of religious opinion. They, with other serious-

mind English folk, had felt the deepest sympathy for those who had set them an example, but they had seen in these earlier expatriates much more zeal than wisdom, and perceived ample explanation for their failure in the affairs of this world.

When they were ready to depart, the leaders gave out a letter which clearly reveals the state of mind in which they approached the separation from all that they were leaving. It is a very sincere and humble request for the prayers of all who worshipped the God of the English Nation, and for "the removal of suspicions and misconstructions of their Intentions."

This letter had in all probability been drawn up some time before, perhaps by the Reverend John White of Dorchester, and it is a safe assumption that all who were concerned in the direction of the enterprise had been consulted about its contents and its language. It was the formal leave-taking of those who were about to establish a new England in America, and it represents, better than any other single document, the spirit in which the settlement of the Massachusetts Colony was undertaken. Four of the signers had been at the Cambridge

conference in the preceding August. Of the others, Charles Fines, of whom nothing else seems to be known, is supposed to have been of the family of Lord Say and Sele, which was connected by marriage with that of the Earl of Lincoln. Coddington was a merchant and a man of wealth from the English Boston. George Phillips was the only clergyman who appears as taking a leading part in the undertaking.

This tract is not only a fundamental statement of the Puritan state of mind, but the original edition, which was printed in the spring of 1630, is one of the most prized of New England's bibliographical rarities. Of the five copies which are on record as having survived to the present day, only one is in private hands. Two are at Oxford, in the Bodleian and the All Souls College Libraries; one is in the Prince Collection at the Boston Public Library, and the one from which the present facsimile is made is in the John Carter Brown Library at Providence.

G. P. W.

THE
H V M B L E
R E Q V E S T O F
H I S M A I E S T I E S
loyall Subjects, the Governour
and the Company late gone for
N E W - E N G L A N D ;

To the rest of their Brethren, in and of the
Church of *E N G L A N D*.

For the obtaining of their Prayers,
and the removall of suspitions, and mis-
constructions of their Intentions.



L O N D O N,
Printed for I O H N B E L L A M I E. 1630.

(1)



THE HUMBLE
REQUEST OF HIS
Majesties loyall Subjects, the
Governour and the Company late
gone for *New England*; to the rest
of their Brethren in and of the
Church of ENGLAND.

Reverend FATHERS and BRETHREN:



THE generall rumour of this solemne Enterprise, wherein our selves with others, through the providence of the Almighty, are ingaged, as it may spare us the

A 3 labour

(2)

labour of imparting our occasion unto you, so it gives us the more encouragement to strengthen our selves by the procurement of the prayers & blessings of the Lords faithfull Servants : For which end wee are bold to have recourse unto you, as those whom *God* hath placed nearest his throne of Mercy ; which as it affords you the more opportunitie, so it imposeth the greater bond upon you to intercede for his people in all their straights, we beseech you therefore by the mercies of the LORD IESVS to consider us as your Brethren, standing in very great need of
your

(3)

your helpe, and earnestly imploring it. And howsoever your charitie may have met with some occasion of discouragement through the misreport of our intentions, or through the disaffection, or indiscretion, of some of us, or rather, amongst us : for wee are not of those that dreame of perfection in this world; yet we desire you would be pleased to take notice of the principals, and body of our company, as those who esteeme it our honour, to call the *Church of England*, from whence wee rise, our deare Mother, and cannot part from our native Countrie,

(4)

Country, where she specially resideth, without much sadness of heart, and many teares in our eyes, ever acknowledging that such hope and part as wee have obtained in the common salvation, we have received in her bosome, and suckt it from her breasts : wee leave it not therefore, as loathing that milk wherewith we were nourished there, but blessing God for the parentage and education, as members of the same body shall alwayes rejoyce in her good, and unfainedly grieve for any sorrow that shall ever betide her, and while we have breath, syncerely desire and
in-

(5)

indeavour the continuance & abundance of her welfare, with the enlargement of her bounds in the kingdome of CHRIST IESVS.

Be pleased therefore *Reverend* FATHERS & BRETHREN to helpe forward this worke now in hand ; which if it prosper, you shall bee the more glorious, howsoever your judgment is with the LORD, and your reward with your GOD. It is an usuall and laudable exercise of your charity to commend to the prayers of your Congregations the necessities and straights of your private neighbours; Doe the
B like

(6)

like for a Church springing
cut of your owne bowels. VVe
conceive much hope that this
remembrance of us, if it be fre-
quent and fervent, will bee a
most prosperous gale in our
sailes, and prouide such a pas-
sage and welcome for us, from
the G O D of the whole earth,
as both we which shall finde it,
and your selves, with the rest
of our friends, who shal heare
of it, shall be much enlarged to
bring in such daily returnes of
Thank-givings, as the special-
ties of his Providence and
Goodnes may justly challenge
at all our hands. You are not
ignorant, that the Spirit of
God

(7)

God stirred up the Apostle *Paul* to make continuall mention of the Church of *Philippi* (which was a Colonie from *Rome*) let the same Spirit, we beseech you, put you in mind, that are the Lords remembrancers, to pray for us without ceasing (who are a weake Colony from yourselves) making continuall request for us to God in all your prayers.

What we intreat of you that are the Ministers of God, that we also crave at the hands of all the rest of our Brethren, that they would at no time forget us in their private solicitations at the throne of Grace.

B 2 If

(8)

If any there be, who through want of cleare intelligence of our course, or tenderesse of affection towards us, cannot conceive so well of our way as we could desire, we would intreat such not to despise us, nor to desert us in their prayers & affections, but to consider rather, that they are so much the more bound to expresse the bowels of their compassion towards us, remembring alwaies that both Nature and Grace, doth ever binde us to relieve and rescue with our utmost & speediest power, such as are deare unto us, when wee conceive them to be running uncomfortable

comfortable hazards.

What goodnes you shall extend to us in this or any other Christian kindnesse, wee your Brethren in CHRIST I E S V S shall labour to repay in what dutie wee are or shall be able to performe, promising so farre as God shall enable us to give him no rest on your behalves, wishing our heads and hearts may be as fountaines of teares for your everlasting welfare, when wee shall be in our poore Cottages in the wilderness, over-shadowed with the spirit of supplication, through the manifold necessities and tribulations which
may

(10)

may not altogether unexpectedly, nor, we hope, unprofitably befall us. And so commending you to the grace of GOD in CHRIST, wee shall ever rest

Your assured Friends

From *Tarmouth* and Brethren,
aboord the *Arbella*
April 7. 1630.

To: Winthroe Gov. Rich: Saltonstall.
Charles Fines, Isaac Iohnson.

Tbo: Dudley.
George Philipps. William Coddington
&c. &c.

